THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT: THE STATE OF THE ART

Utami Widiati[1] and Bambang Yudi Cahyono[2]

Abstract: *As an important element of language and as the essential part of linguistic competence, grammar has a central role in making up learners' language skills and their communicative competence. However, from the historical perspective of language teaching methodology, the role of grammar has once been over-emphasized, likely neglected, or treated equally important with fluency in communication. This article reviews aspects of the teaching of grammar, varying from common issues of grammar teaching in the broader perspective of foreign/second language learning to the teaching of grammar as well as research on grammar teaching in the Indonesian context. In light of the discussion of these various issues, this article provides some recommendations for future research and insights for addressing grammar in English language classrooms in Indonesia.*

Key words: *English grammar, grammatical structures, language learning, linguistic competence, communicative competence*

INTRODUCTION

Success in learning English as a second/foreign language manifests in the abilities in employing various skills which are important for communication both orally and in a written form. These language skills include listening and

1 **Dra. Utami Widiati, M.A., Ph.D.** <uwidiati@yahoo.com> is a full-time lecturer at State University of Malang.

2 **Drs. Bambang Yudi Cahyono, M.Pd, M.A., Ph.D.** <yudic2000@yahoo.com> is a full-time lecturer at State University of Malang.

reading (receptive skills) as well as speaking and writing (productive skills). However, success in performing these four language skills are essentially dependent upon some 'language learning ingredients', such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, which are usually called language elements. Among these three language elements, grammar is considered the most important as it serves as the foundation for more advanced language learning. Analoging language learning as the building of a house, grammar serves to be the foundation of the house. Once it is strongly built, it could be used as a basis for the development of other parts of the house (Weissberg 1974).

The role of grammar in language teaching has undergone changes. Previously, grammar teaching formed such an essential part of language instruction that other aspects of language learning were ignored (Richards and Renandya 2002). Language teaching was dominated by analyzing structures and applying rules under the argument that if you knew the grammatical rules of the language, you would be able to communicate in the language. For example, when the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was in fashion, language learning was aimed at learning the grammatical system of the language (Stern 1983). This concept was getting less popular with the emergence of the Direct Method which emphasized "the use of the target language as a means of instruction and communication in the language classroom" (Stern 1983:456).

According to Celce-Murcia (1979 cited in Larsen-Freeman 1991), the shift from the analytic GTM to the Direct Method in the early twentieth century shows the distinctive pattern. More recently, as the notion of communicative competence rose in popularity, the knowledge of grammatical system was considered only one of the many components of the communicative competence (Canale and Swain 1980). Grammar teaching then became less essential, and sometimes was even neglected. In other words, second language educators have alternated between favoring teaching approaches focusing on having students analyze language and those encouraging students to use the language. Two beliefs are apparent here: "if students learned the form, communication would somehow take care of itself" (Eskey 1983 cited in Larsen-Freeman 1991:279); and if students learn to use the language, "grammar will take care of itself" (Roberts 1998:149).

In recent years, however, grammar teaching has regained its place in language curriculum as people agree that grammar is too important to be

ignored (Richards and Renandya 2002). A significant amount of classroom time should be devoted to grammar knowledge as without good knowledge of grammar; learners' language development will be severely constrained.

Grammar is once again receiving its due (Larsen-Freeman 1991); however, there should be a broader understanding of what it means to teach grammar. Unlike what has been practiced, the teaching of grammar should now mean enabling language students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately because linguistic competence is part of communicative competence.

The focus of this article is to review the practice of grammar teaching in the Indonesian context as well as studies that have been reported concerning grammar teaching. Prior to the review, this article presents issues in grammar teaching, followed by the discussion of a frame of reference in grammar teaching.

ISSUES IN GRAMMAR TEACHING

There has been an inconclusive discussion regarding the role of grammar teaching in second/foreign language learning. In the end of 1970s, Larsen-Freeman (1979) pointed out that there are a number of issues in the teaching of grammar that can be categorized into those which are methodological (e.g., treatment of errors, emphasis on either inductive or deductive learning, role of first language, and sequence of grammatical items) and practical (e.g., presentation of grammatical structure, essence of drills and practice, emphasis on either linear or cyclical syllabus, and heterogeneous class).

In her later article, Larsen-Freeman (1991) revisited grammar-teaching issues and considered those related to pedagogy to be important ones. These include sequencing, presentation, and error correction. With regard to sequencing, it has been noted that learners do not learn structures one at a time. However, there seems to be little control over where to start a grammar sequence. The usual advice is to begin with the simple structures and move towards the more complex, though the concepts of simplicity and complexity are not easily and operationally defined.

The presentation of grammar concerns whether teachers should work inductively or deductively. The inductive approach, as the name suggests, induces grammatical rules within the language input given to the learners, while the deductive approach stresses explicit teaching (or conscious learning) of grammatical rules (Roberts 1998:146). Finally, error correction is considered necessary for pedagogical practice. Students very often deliberately ask for error correction to help them with their language learning tasks. However, this should be taken with caution. While at times focused error correction is highly desirable, at other times there are clear occasions where error correction can be disturbing and thus unexpected.

Regardless of the issues explained above, it is important to note that the issue now does not lie anymore in whether or not we should teach grammar (Richards and Renandya 2002); rather, it lies in which grammar items to teach and how best to teach them. The decision upon what points of grammar to teach, in particular, according to Swan (2002:151), depends on circumstances and learners' needs in the context. In his words, "...it is difficult to measure the functional load of a given linguistic item independent of context ...". However, he suggests that the list of grammar points to teach include such things as basic verb forms, interrogative and negative structures, the use of the main tenses, and modal auxiliaries.

Whatever the situation, the points of grammar to teach should be those needing teaching in the light of the two factors of comprehensibility and acceptability. Comprehensible sentences will possibly be made if there is knowledge of how to build and use certain structures to communicate common types of meaning. However, in some contexts such as academic one, to be acceptable requires a higher level of grammatical correctness than comprehensibility.

Regarding how best to teach grammatical items, in particular, teaching grammar inductively or deductively is not a discrete option. As Larsen-Freeman points out, "the choice is not one resolvable with an either/or approach" (1991:292). Observations indicate that a combination of induction and deduction produces the best result.

When practicing a deductive approach, teachers would present the generalization and ask students to apply it to the language sample. When practicing an inductive approach, teachers would be able to assess what the

students already know about a particular structure and to make any necessary modifications in their lesson plan.

To put it briefly, despite the great number of issues in the teaching of grammar and inconclusive discussion over it, two issues, what grammar points to teach and how to teach them, are of paramount importance. Thus, teachers are advised to teach grammatical items as needed by their learners and they should present them in such a way that they could help learners learn the grammar points better. In order to get better insights on these two important issues, the following section discusses a considerably representative framework for grammar teaching.

FRAMEWORK FOR GRAMMAR TEACHING

As stated before, a way of teaching grammar to students which is more useful than the traditional method of pattern practice is the one that is harmonious with the assumptions that linguistic accuracy is essentially part of communicative competence. Accordingly, the teaching of grammar should not focus on forms/structures alone. Larsen-Freeman (1991:280) states, "in dealing with the complexity of grammar there are three dimensions: the form or structures themselves, their semantics or meaning, and the pragmatic conditions governing their use". Using Larsen-Freeman's three dimensions, the teaching of grammar (or language learners) should be directed to the use of the forms/structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. The relationship between the three dimensions can be seen in Figure 1.

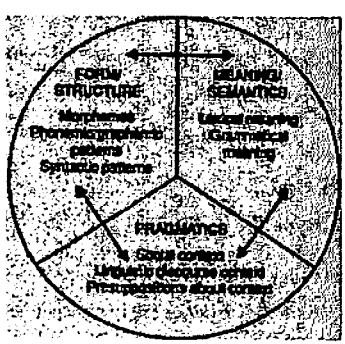

Figure 1: A Three-Dimensional Grammar Framework
(Larsen-Freeman 1991: 280)

The figure suggests that there are three dimensions in dealing with grammar. According to Larsen-Freeman (1991), the three dimensions are not hierarchically arranged, but they are interconnected, as shown by the arrows. By implication, a change in one dimension gives impacts on the other two. The *form/structure* part shows that linguistic forms or structures are composed of different structural constructions varying from morphemic construction to phonemic/graphemic and syntactic patterns. The *meaning/ semantics* part deals with what a grammar means, both lexically, or as defined in the dictionary, and grammatically. The *pragmatics* part entails meanings based on the social context and interpreted at a discourse level. In this case, the influence of pragmatics, that is the study of meaning intended by a speaker/ writer (Yule 1996:127), can be ascertained by the two questions of "when or why a speaker/writer chooses a particular grammar structure over another" and "when or why a speaker/writer varies the form of a particular linguistic structure" (Larsen-Freeman 1991:281). In short, when teaching, a teacher of grammar should bring to learners' understanding the three issues of how the structure is formed, what it means, and when/why it is used.

As illustration, the results of analyzing the framework can be seen in the teaching of the *'s* possessive form. Forming possessives in English requires inflecting regular singular nouns and irregular plural nouns not ending in *s* with *'s*, or by adding an apostrophe after *s* ending of regular plural nouns and singular nouns ending in the sound *s*. Beside possession, the possessive form might mean description (*the president's palace*), amount *(a week's salary)*, relationship (*Robert's brother*), part/whole (*my friend's face*), and origin/ agent (*Einstein's theory*). Pragmatically, possession in English can be expressed in some ways; they are possessive determiners (e.g., *my, your,* and *their*), the use of *'of'* (e.g., *the cover of the book*), and *'s* (e.g., *John's book*). Teachers of grammar then should show that contexts often distinguish which way is more appropriate.

All the three dimensions, according to Larsen-Freeman (1991), have to be mastered, although not necessarily consciously, by the learner. Thus, teachers should not be interested in merely filling students with grammatical rules. This is because grammar teaching is not merely knowledge transmission, but it is also skill development.

GRAMMAR TEACHING IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

When discussing grammar teaching in the Indonesian context, there are at least three points to ponder: how the prevailing curriculum prescriptively guides the teaching of English, how grammar teaching has been practiced so far, and what practitioners or researchers think regarding how grammar should be taught. The remaining part of this section highlights these issues consecutively.

A. Grammar teaching from the perspectives of the curricula

The teaching of English in Indonesia started in the Dutch occupation era, but there has been no detailed description on how English teaching which was mostly conducted by expatriates from the Netherland was implemented. In 1945, the "old-style" curriculum was introduced, applying the grammar-translation method and then, in 1958, it was replaced by the "new-style" audiolingually-based curriculum (Jazadi 2004). However, the analysis of the grammar teaching would be best started from the application of the 1975 English curriculum which was issued to revise the earlier curriculum, yet maintaining the use of structure-based audiolingual principles. It was considered best, because the curriculum was supported by the wide use of two series of textbooks: *English for the SLTP* and *English for the SLTA*, the titles of which reflect the intended users of the textbooks, junior and senior high schools, respectively. As the syllabus was structurally oriented, these textbooks and other textbooks written with insights from the curriculum were rich in grammar exercises presented in the forms of subtitutions or form changes. Thus, based on the establishment of structurally-based syllabus and the use of structural textbooks; it seemed clear that the teaching of English under the 1975 curriculum was conducted much through pattern practice, reflecting the dominance of grammar teaching.

In 1984, a new curriculum, popularly called 'communicative curriculum' was introduced, bringing an idea that English should be taught more communicatively. However, the idea was not supported by the establishment of syllabus which was developed on the basis of the principles of the communicative language teaching (CLT). As a result, structural orientation was kept to be the dominant feature of many textbooks (Jazadi 2004: 3). One possible effect of this structure-based orientation is that students learned

grammatical structures better than using the language skills. This was apparent in a criticism which says, "college graduates do not master English because their English teachers at the secondary schools focused too much on the mastery of grammatical points instead of the mastery of language skills" (Gatra 1996 cited in Saukah 1997: 298). The condition was getting worse because, in the field, the new English curriculum was misinterpreted as focusing on the development of oral communicative competence only. Consequently, the structure-based communicative curriculum was deemed to fail to help students develop abilities to communicate meaningfully. Because of this, the curriculum was revised and a decade later, the Department of the Education and Culture established a new curriculum called the meaningfulness approach. The term "meaningfulness" was used to avoid misinterpretation of the term "communicative" used in the earlier curriculum (Huda 1995).

Under the 1994 English syllabus, grammatical points are no longer the topics to be discussed or covered in the teaching and learning activities (Saukah 1997). Instead, themes and topics representing aspects of life are used, not as the instructional materials to be mastered, but as means for organizing the instructional materials. In addition, the ultimate instructional objective of English teaching at the secondary schools was the mastery of the four language skills (Saukah 2000:197). The instruction includes the language materials necessary for reading, listening, speaking, and writing in situations relevant to the students' immediate and future needs. The language activities involve the students in using the language for communicative functions in their real life. These kinds of teaching and learning activities are expected to address the criticism, as cited above, that was frequently directed toward the earlier curriculum. The role of grammar was determined as just one of the language components, besides vocabulary and spelling/ pronunciation, to support the mastery of the four language skills (Saukah 1997). Yet, such an understanding of the role of grammar has led to teaching practice where grammar tends to be neglected. It was then understandable if some teachers perceived that teaching grammar was forbidden.

With the implementation of the 2004 curriculum, which is essentially a text-based one, the role of grammar appears to be essential. As students of English are expected to socially function, they should be equipped with the knowledge of and the use of various genres in the society. Each genre is characterized by its purposes or social function, its generic structure, and its

lexicogrammatical feature (Agustien, Anugerahwati, and Wachidah 2004). The aspect of lexicogrammatical implies the need for learning grammar for language learning. The curriculum suggests that grammar be introduced to students, following Ur's (1996:78) words, "to receive and produce interesting and purposeful meanings within the context of real-life language use".

However, the curriculum does not explicitly indicate which grammar items to teach. Rather, teachers are expected to sensitively decide which grammar items learners need most in relation to each genre. This will surely result in the variety of grammar points to teach from schools to schools. There have been no standardized textbooks so far, but some textbooks which are available explicitly state the lexicogrammatical feature of a particular genre. Regardless of the variety of grammatical items to emphasize for a particular genre, the curriculum seems to highlight the argument that grammar teaching does aid foreign language acquisition. Formal grammar teaching is likely to happen during the first stage of the four subsequent stages of the teaching cycle: Building Knowledge of the Field, Modelling of the Text, Joint Construction of the Text, and Independent Construction of the Text (Agustien, Anugerahwati, and Wachidah 2004).

This sub-section has sketched grammar teaching in the Indonesian context from the perspective of the curriculum. It suggests that although emphasis on grammar teaching fluctuates from curriculum to curriculum, grammar, in some points of time, has been over emphasized, deemphasized, and then revitalized in the current mode of English teaching. In addition to seeing grammar teaching from the curricular perspective, the real practice of grammar teaching in the context can be seen from the following section, which reports various theoretical and practical ideas of researchers and teachers in Indonesia who have been concerned with grammar teaching.

B. The practice of grammar teaching

Perhaps, an appropriate point to start the analysis of grammar teaching practice is to see it from the level of education of the students. Grammar teaching practice for secondary school students, to whom the English curriculum is targeted, is rarely reported. One of the reasons is that teachers are normally advised to follow techniques of teaching as prescribed by the curriculum which are translated top-down through national/provincial teacher

training (e.g., Training of Teachers/TOT) and through teachers' forums such as the *Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, commonly called MGMP (forum of subject matter teachers; another type of forum which existed formerly was the *Pemantapan Kerja Guru*, commonly called PKG, teachers work establishment). An example of grammar presentation technique which was once popular in the 1980s was the EGRA, suggesting a sequence of instruction, moving from giving Example, drawing Generalization, providing Reinforcement, and assigning tasks to students for Application. Such information is frequently obtained more from interaction and activities with teachers in various occasions than from the literature.

Another way to examine grammar teaching practice at the secondary school level is by analyzing the ways grammar tasks or exercises are provided in textbooks for junior and senior high school students. In English textbooks reflecting the 1975 English curriculum, provision of explicit grammar exercises has been a typical mode. An example of such type of exercises can be seen from the following excerpt:

Substitute:

	This knife is the same as yours. It is different from mine.
Shirt	This *shirt* is the same as yours. It is different from mine.
He/she	This knife is the same as *his*. It is different from *hers*.

1. bag	4. you-I	7. knife	10. office
2. we-they	5. magazine	8. radio	11. you-I
3. house	6. he-we	9. they-she	12. flag

(Chaidir 1981:52)

With the application of the 2004 curriculum, explaining grammar through the lexicogrammatical features of a genre is a common way. For example, Cahyono and Purnama's (2006) *Communicative Competence* lists the following lexicogrammatical features when explaining narrative texts:

Generic (Lexicogrammatical) Features (of a narrative text):

1. A narrative focuses on specific participants.
2. There are many action verbs, verbal and mental processes.
3. It usually uses **past tenses**.
4. Direct and indirect speeches are often used.
5. Linking words are used, related with time.
6. There are sometimes some dialogs and the tense can change.
7. Descriptive language is used to create listener's or reader's imagination.
8. **Temporal conjunctions** are also used.

(Cahyono and Purnama 2006: 2; Emphasis original)

Another way in presenting grammar materials is providing explanation, rules, and examples, with limited or without exercises. For example, the following excerpt was taken from James' (2005) *English in Action* which is prepared for social and science program of senior high school students of Grade 12:

> In English, if we want to talk about imaginary or unreal situations in the past we use ***third conditional sentences***. **Third conditional sentences** have this formula:
>
> If + had + past participle à would + have + participle
>
> **Examples:** ***If*** Diana ***had been*** poor, she ***wouldn't have met*** Charles.
>
> ***If*** Diana ***had done*** well at school, she ***would have gone*** to university.
>
> **Note carefully!** The order of the sentences can be reversed. … If Diana had been poor, *she wouldn't have met Charless*, becomes *Diana wouldn't have met Charless, if she had been poor.*
>
> (James 2005 : 135)

Thus, assuming that teachers use a particular textbook when teaching, the way grammatical points are presented in the textbook is likely to affect the way grammatical points are taught in the classroom. However, it should be noted that grammar presentation in some textbooks are not always accurate. In his examination of the grammatical contents of Indonesian high school textbooks, Collins (2006) found that a number of textbooks contain

errors in the explanation of grammatical usage. In order to present Collins' point of view more clearly, the errors are listed as follows:

1. "Grammatical analyses are often presented that are out-of step with those now widely accepted in contemporary Descriptive Linguistics" *(analytical soundness),*
2. "Often fine balance between accuracy and simplicity/ pedagogical effectiveness topples in favour of the latter" *(simplicity at the expense of accuracy),*
3. "Some of the books surveyed were noted to rely heavily upon notional (solely meaning-based) definitions of grammatical categories" *(reliance on notional definitions),*
4. "A failure to maintain the fundamental distinction between grammatical class and grammatical function" *(maintenance of the class vs function distinction),*
5. "Traditional Grammars are noted for their inclusion of categories which are derived from Latin grammar but which have no place in the grammar of contemporary English" (*Latin bias*),
6. "Some of the authors are influenced by conservative prescriptive analyses which are out of touch with the facts of contemporary usage" *(prescriptive bias),*
7. "There was an alarming incidence of factual errors in the textbooks examined" (*factual errors*), and
8. "The textbooks contained many instances of non-idiomatic English" *(non-idiomatic English)*

(Collins 2006: 4-8)

At tertiary level, especially at departments of English, grammar is given under the course names such as *Grammar*, *Structure*, *English Grammar*, or *English Structure* (e.g. Widayati and Anugerahwati 2005), which are usually offered sequentially for three to four semesters. Universities have the autonomy of determining time allotment, selecting textbooks, and adopting certain teaching methodologies. For example, in the English Department of State University of Malang, a series of grammar courses is taught in three semesters with 4-4-2 semester hours (Widayati and

Anugerahwati 2005). One of the required textbooks is Azar's (1989) *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. Because the students are expected to learn grammar points discretely for mastery of accuracy, grammar points are normally taught by following the structure of presentation in the required textbooks. At other departments where English is offered, the focus of teaching English is generally developing students' reading skills. In such a case, grammar is often explicitly introduced in classroom activities to facilitate the process of comprehending texts.

Stated briefly, the practice of grammar teaching varies from one level of education to another. At the secondary level, grammar-teaching practice is greatly influenced by some normative approaches recommended by the government and disseminated through teachers' forums, as well as by grammar presentation in secondary school textbooks. At the tertiary level, grammar presentation may vary across departments or purposes of presentation.

C. Proposed ideas on grammar teaching

In addition to the description of grammar-teaching practice as demanded by the curriculum, as prescribed by English teaching policies, or as presented in English textbooks as outlined above, literature has also been examined to find out what ideas regarding grammar teaching have been proposed in the Indonesian context. The proposed ideas are usually reported by instructors of grammar courses based on their observation or classroom experiences. Accordingly, the ideas proposed have some sound basis, and thus, they are worth-discussing.

In her article addressing the important role of textual supplementary materials for the teaching of English grammar, Widiati (1995) emphasized the importance of giving more attention to meaning through textual materials rather than teaching forms out of context, such as through sentence patterns, when teaching English grammar. Textual supplementary materials refer to text-based grammar exercises and activities matching grammar and discourse. Examples of these materials include texts of various genres which have special grammatical features, such as report and procedure texts which show how tenses and directives are naturally used, respectively. According to Widiati (1995), the provision of texts bearing different grammatical structures which

are functionally used will help students learn grammatical structures which are contextually used in languages, not in the structures *per se*. Furthermore, because such materials can be used independently by the students outside the classroom, they will have more opportunities to expose themselves through wider activities beyond the classroom practice which is conducted only during school period. Finally, textual supplementary materials will encourage students to read more extensively and, thus, to improve their reading habit which is important for incidental language learning.

Similarly, Suryanto (2005) reported the use of meaning-based approach to teach English grammar, more particularly, subject-verb agreement, through the use of reading texts (i.e., articles on crime in big cities and travelers' health tips). The students' attention was especially drawn to sentences containing subject-verb agreements and then these constructions were explained in relation to their meanings. Following the explanation, the teacher referred to the students' own construction of subject-verb agreements from their essays that were submitted earlier. This way, the teacher raised the students' awareness in using subject-verb agreements. Based on the students' performance after treatment, Suryanto (2005) concluded that meaning-based approach can be used to minimize students' errors in using subject-verb agreement.

An integration of grammar teaching and aspects of language teaching has been recommended by some authors (e.g. Antoni 2003, Hariyanto 1997). Hariyanto (1997), for example, proposed the use of a kind of functional-structural syllabus which is organized on the basis of themes which he called "bridging technique". It consisted of several steps: input presentation, function and structure presentation, and skill practice. As Hariyanto (1997) claimed and as the name of the technique suggests, the technique is useful in bridging the grammar presentation and communicative activities. Based on his learning and teaching experience, Antoni (2003) recommended that grammar and topics be taught in an integrated manner in order to avoid two extreme cases: teaching grammar out of context and emphasizing topics-based language at the expense of grammar teaching. Some strategies that he proposed include: teaching linguistic forms into topics, teaching topics with sufficient language expressions, and teaching both forms and topics simultaneously.

Some authors have proposed the use of certain approaches, such as prescriptive (Artini 2001) and interpretative (Sugiharto 2004), in the teaching

of English grammar. Artini (2001) argues that there is a need of uniformity in terms of grammar when English is taught as a foreign language like the one in Indonesia. Therefore, she recommended the application of the prescriptive grammar, which is often considered out of dateas well as not permissive to language change. She believed that uniformity in certain aspect of English should be established, otherwise English would be damaged. The need for uniformity in the context relates to language testing, language environment, size of foreign language classes, and textbooks.

Sugiharto (2004) readvocated the interpretation-based approach to the teaching of grammar in a foreign language context, such as in Indonesia. Interpretation-approach, which was initially proposed by Ellis (1995), focuses on the importance of introducing grammatical features within the language input the learners need to learn the language. The approach has several features: it emphasizes input comprehension over production; stimulus for interpretation should be given in order that learners could respond either personally or referentially; and meaning is emphasized prior to understanding form and function. Although Sugiharto (2004) claimed that this approach was effective, as indicated by his review of research results, the application of this approach needs experimenting in the Indonesian context before it can be actually applied in this country.

In sum, this sub-section indicates that various ideas need to be examined further by looking into the benefits they offer before being applied for the improvement of grammar-teaching practice in a wider Indonesian context. Hariyanto's (1997) and Antoni's (2003) proposals are answers for the tendency of discrete grammar teaching as it not only sensitizes the learners in using accurate rule of grammar but also helps induce communicative activities and topics, in grammar instruction. While Sugiharto (2004) reminds us of matching the grammar points taught to the students' level of competency in using language, Suryanto (2005) reminds us of including meaning when explaining grammar. It is interesting to note that, long before genre approach becomes a favorable fashion in this country recently, Widiati (1995) emphasized the use of various genre-based materials in order to support students' grammar mastery. Artini's (2001) recommendation seems to be an interesting offer to cope with problems of variety and uncertainty regarding what lexicogrammatical features should be taught at a particular point of

time as the 2004 English curriculum is not keen with uniformity regarding grammar points to teach.

Overall, drawing on the discussion of grammar teaching in this section, it is clear that there has been a great variety and ideas regarding grammar-teaching practice in Indonesia. This section suggests that what has been prescriptively advocated in the curricula does not necessarily lead to uniform practice in the field, notwithstanding grammar teaching in the secondary schools. As a normative standard, the curriculum has served its purpose in providing curricular guidelines of grammar teaching, although it can be translated differently into practical application in English textbooks. Moreover, while curriculum is on its way of implementation, ideas regarding grammar teaching have emerged, bringing some suggested approach when teaching grammar. Although the knowledge of the curricular perspectives and insights of the teaching of grammar as explained in this section will make us better informed when actually determining what grammatical points to teach and how to teach them in the classroom, our knowledge will not be complete without knowing what research studies related to grammar teaching have shown, an issue which is discussed in the following section.

RESEARCH STUDIES RELATED TO GRAMMAR TEACHING

Research studies related to grammar teaching that have been carried out commonly deal with analyzing students' grammatical errors with a purpose to describe students' grammatical competence. According to Cahyono (1995), there are two strands of research studies which analyze students' grammatical errors: error analysis in using specified grammatical structures and error mapping in the use of grammatical structures. The former research strand aims to know "the difficult grammatical structures encountered by learners at a particular level and at any time", whereas the latter aims to examine "the most difficult grammatical structures encountered by the learners from different levels at the same time" (Cahyono 1995:82).

The error analysis research indicated that the level of difficulty of a particular grammatical item varies from one student to another. Examples include examination of students' abilities in using *tenses* (Agustina 1994), *articles* (Bawafi 1993), *prepositions* (Bram 2005), *structure of modification* (Hidayati 1994), and *present perfect tense* (Rohman 2006). For example,

Bram (2005) found that Indonesian students involved in his research encountered three major errors in using prepositions.

The errors include incorrect choice of preposition (e.g. *the same with*, not *the same as* and *different with*, not *different from*), omission of prepositions (e.g. *wait their passengers*, missing *for* after *wait* and *replied* the question, missing *to* after *replied*), and addition of unnecessary prepositions (e.g. *discussing about the problem* and *asked to him*, where *about* and *to* are not needed). Bram attributed the three major errors in using English prepositions to the interference of students' first language, Indonesian. Nevertheless, Bram did not recommend any hints in dealing with these problems.

The error mapping research showed that certain grammatical structures are considered difficult by learners from various levels regardless of the fact that they have been taught. For example, Tresnadewi, Cahyono and Astuti (1995) found out that students had difficulties using *adjective clauses*, *comparative degrees*, *adverb clauses of time*, and *pronouns*. Although students commonly find these grammatical items hard to learn, these items are not necessarily the most frequent errors that can be identified from students' work. This is evident from research studies conducted by Adenan (2002) and Mardijono (2003). Based on data drawn from students of English education of various semesters, Adenan (2002) found out that the most frequent grammatical errors fall into the categories of *numbers*, *prepositions*, *articles*, and *tenses*. Similarly, Mardijono (2003) found that the most occurring syntactical errors include *number agreement*, *subject verb agreement*, *determiners*, and *tenses*. He added that other errors included *basic verbs*, *past participles*, *possessive case* (morphological) and omission of *be* and incorrect use of *past participle* (transformational).

The results of these two research strands suggest that grammatical instruction and learning contribute to the grammatical competence of Indonesian learners and sufficient length of instructional and learning time should be spent focusing on certain grammatical structures which are essentially difficult. In the remainder of this section, some of research findings on the effectiveness of grammar teaching are presented.

A common way to improve students' awareness of grammatical structures is to present grammar points through writing. Based on her

experience in teaching writing, Widiati (1994) reported that faulty reference of pronouns was frequently found in students' composition. Students usually used pronouns to refer to words which were quite far away. Or, the pronouns they used did not clearly refer to which words. In this case, the use of repetition would be much more advisable than the use of pronouns. Such problems might result in the lack of writing coherence. Therefore, more assignments on the use of pronouns should be provided in writing classes as a way to equip students with skills in sentence building.

A research study conducted by Cahyono and Mukminatien (2002) integrated the teaching of grammatical structures in a writing course at a tertiary level. The writing course aimed to provide learners with the abilities to write persuasive essays, while grammar instruction integrated in the writing class was given to help learners learn grammatical structures explicitly in the writing course. Weekly assignments, which was called the "structure-based writing assignments" (SBWA), were given to the students on the basis of grammatical errors in their essays. Analysis of grammatical items in the students' essays indicated that *verb phrases*, *complex sentences*, *pluralization*, *noun determiners*, and *subject-verb agreement* were grammatical structures students found most difficult and the SBWA was effective in minimizing students' errors in the first four of these grammatical structures.

The teaching insight shared by Widiati (1994) and the research finding reported by Cahyono and Mukminatien (2002) suggested that grammar teaching is likely to be effective in increasing students' grammatical awareness. This conclusion is further supported by Sukyadi (2005) who investigated the syntactic knowledge of students as indicated by the syntactical errors in their composition. In Sukyadi's study, the students were given a syntax-oriented test, which included syntactic elements such as parts of speech, verbs, sentence patterns, nouns and pronouns, pronoun references, agreement, adjectives and adverbs. Syntactical errors in compositions were counted in terms of language use (i.e., T-units).

The study revealed that the students' syntactical errors were caused by lack of proofreading rather than syntactic knowledge. In other words, students' grammatical competence, which was probably the result of the teaching of grammar, has an important role in helping them construct English sentences, yet they need to be more careful when writing their compositions.

It is important to note that Indonesian students, as Mukminatien suggests, face the problem of "insufficient acquired rules due to lack of natural exposure to the language" (1999:113). In order to help them use their grammatical competence, they need to be more actively involved in communicative tasks.

GRAMMAR TEACHING PRACTICE AND RESEARCH: FUTURE AREAS OF CONCERN

In light of the pedagogical issues and theoretical framework of grammar instruction, it is worthwhile to emphasize that grammar should not be abandoned in the teaching of English in Indonesia, regardless of the curriculum used. At the tertiary level of education, as each educational institution has the freedom in establishing its own curriculum, what grammar points to teach and when to teach them (Richards and Renandya 2002) may not be as much an issue as they are at the secondary level of education. Furthermore, whether grammar points should be taught inductively or deductively is not crucial as these two approaches are complementary (Larsen-Freeman 1979 1991). However, it is important to recommend that the teaching of grammar at tertiary level be made more contextual (Antoni 2003), meaningful (Hariyanto 1997), and/or suitable with the level of the students' current grammatical knowledge (Adenan 2002, Sugiharto 2004).

Regardless of how grammar is taught, it seems that some grammatical points are likely to be so hard for some students that they lead to usage errors. With regard to this, Mardijono (2003) recommended that teachers help their students "see and avoid making the same type of errors in their grammatical performance" (2003:83) and Adenan (2002:25) suggested that teachers should "manage learning strategies suitable for students of a particular level in order to enhance language learning" [translated version].

At the secondary level of education, the important issues of what grammar points to teach and when to teach them (Richards and Renandya 2002) need to be integrated in the current application of the genre-based approach in the teaching of English. An attempt should be made to identify what lexicogrammatical features of various genres are taught and to determine the features across genres needed most by the students. This prescriptive effort can lead to uniformity (Artini 2001) regarding what

grammar to teach which, in turn, avoids confusion among teachers. As the genres taught in secondary schools have been outlined in the curriculum, the teaching of lexicogrammatical features according to the genres taught is the answer to the question of when to teach grammar. Thus, relevant grammar points can be taught when discussing *recount/spoof, anecdote, narrative, procedure,* and *report* genres at junior high school level (*Depdiknas* 2005a). At senior high school level, the students' knowledge of the same grammar points can be reinforced when those genres are taught again. In addition, similar or other grammar points can be taught when discussing genres of *news item, exposition (analytical and hortatory), explanation, review,* and *discussion* (*Depdiknas* 2005b).

In addition to what to teach and when to teach grammatical points, an important question to raise is whether the grammar teaching practice in Indonesia has been inspired by the Three-Dimensional Grammar Framework (Larsen-Freeman1991) which unifies language forms (phonemic, morphemic, & syntactic patterns), conventional meaning (semantics), and meaning intended by the speaker (pragmatics). With the discrete teaching of grammar through a series of grammar courses in English departments (e.g., Widayati and Anugerahwati 2005), it seems that the framework has not been applied much in the teaching of grammar in the departments. It stands to reason then that some experts (Antoni 2003, Hariyanto 1997, Sugiharto2004) have proposed ideas valuing some elements of the framework. With the teaching of English oriented to texts of English for specific purposes, grammar teaching might not be greatly needed at non-English department. Students in these departments are expected to be able to read their ESP-based materials to support the mastery of their content areas.

Looking into the current issues discussed above, future research should be directed to the examination of how elements of the three-dimensional grammar framework can be fully included in the teaching of grammar. At the secondary level of education, there is a more spacious room for such exploration than at the tertiary level of education as the teaching of English in junior and senior high schools is oriented to the mastery of various genres, bearing the pragmatic values of the society. On the other hand, unless there is a modification in the orientation of grammar teaching, that is, from discrete to a more integrative teaching or from ESP-oriented to a more general

approach, there is a tendency to a status quo with regard to grammar teaching practice in both English and non-English departments, respectively. Empirically, such various issues of grammar teaching need investigating.

CONCLUSION

The review shows that there was some overemphasis on English grammar teaching at some time and over reactive neglect at other time. Such pendulums might have been caused by either the curriculum being implemented in the country or language teaching methodologies in fashion. We now seem to have a healthier respect for the place of grammar teaching in today's competency-based curriculum, the emphasis of which is the development of linguistic, discourse, sociocultural, and strategic competencies. The immediate objective of grammar teaching should be to increase knowledge of the English language system so that the longer term objective of improving both receptive and productive skills can be achieved.

The three-dimensional grammar framework is useful in helping teachers assess their own knowledge of the language and that of their students. Teachers should find ways of how to articulate the contents of the three components in the framework for each structure they are teaching. By doing so, teachers encourage students to use the structure accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately.

It is also necessary to note that grammar teaching may form the main focus of a lesson, but may be only part of a course design. Whatever the case is, teachers have to take the decision as to where the grammar teaching should be placed in a sequence, before, during, or after a communicative task or a receptive-skills activity. It is worth considering that many grammar activities may be entirely inappropriate for certain types of students and with certain areas of language.

Put together, the beliefs about learning, the three-dimensional framework, and the characteristics of practice activities constitute the basis for the development of linguistic competence. Teachers should then pursue the business of finding better and better techniques for getting this linguistic competence into communicative competence.

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